

Message Text

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ACTION H-03

INFO OCT-01 AF-04 ARA-10 EUR-08 ISO-00 SS-07 NSCE-00

AID-01 SSO-00 /034 W

-----074862 211947Z /46

O 211840Z NOV 77

FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6855

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMCONSUL LUBUMBASHI

AMCONSUL BUKAVU

AMEMBASSY BRAZZAVILLE

AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY HAVANA

AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY PARIS

CONFIDENTIAL SECTION 1 OF 2 KINSHASA 11069

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OREP (PRICE, MELVIN) MORG MPOL MARR CG AO

SUBJECT: ZAIRE VISIT OF CODEL PRICE

REF: STATE 257799

1. SUMMARY: CODEL PRICE MADE SUCCESSFUL VISIT TO ZAIRE NOVEMBER 19/20. DURING EXTENSIVE DISCUSSIONS, COORDINATOR OF THE GENERAL STAFF BABIA AND PRESIDENT MOBUTU BOTH STRESSED GOZ'S CONTINUED PREOCCUPATION WITH SOVIET/CUBAN THREAT, NOTABLY EMANATING FROM ANGOLA, AND NEED FOR CONTINUED SECURITY ASSISTANCE FROM US AND ZAIRE'S OTHER SUPPORTERS. END SUMMARY.

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2. CODEL PRICE ARRIVED EARLY AFTERNOON NOVEMBER 19. GENERAL BABIA HEADED ZAIRIAN OFFICIALS AT AIRPORT GREETING CEREMONY. ALSO PRESENT WERE FIVE MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATURE AND ZAIRIAN AMBASSADOR TO WASHINGTON, KASONGO MUTUALE. IMMEDIATELY AFTER ARRIVAL, CHAIRMAN PRICE, ACCOMPANIED BY MRS. PRICE AND CONGRESSMAN WILSON, LAID A WREATH ON THE GRAVE OF THE LATE MRS. MOBUTU. THEN ENTIRE

CODEL ASSEMBLED AT THE AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE FOR A BRIEFING/ DISCUSSION.

3. FOCUS OF VISIT WAS HOUR AND A HALF MEETING WITH PRESIDENT MUBUTU ON BOARD PRESIDENTIAL RIVERBOAT NOVEMBER 20. MOBUTU MADE FOLLOWING MAIN POINTS IN HIS PRESENTATION AND IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS:

(A) SOVIET/CUBAN THREAT--UNDERSCORING HIS CONCERN AT BEING SURROUNDED BY VARYING DEGREES OF "RED" REGIMES, MOBUTU MADE CLEAR HIS PRINCIPAL SECURITY CONCERN WAS CONTINUING SOVIET/CUBAN PRESENCE IN ANGOLA. HE STRESSED POWER IMBALANCE CREATED BY LARGER ARSENAL OF SOVIET EQUIPMENT INCLUDING HUNDREDS OF SOVIET TANKS AND MANY MIG AIRCRAFT. HE SAID THAT IN CONTRAST TO OUR LOWER ESTIMATES, ANGOLAN FONMINISTER IN CONVERSATIONS WITH ZAIRIAN OPPPOSITION REPS IN EUROPE HAD CONFIRMED THERE WERE NOW 25,000 CUBANS IN ANGOLA. HE ALSO DESCRIBED POTENTIAL COMMUNIST-SUPPORTED THREATS FROM CONGO, BURUNDI, AND UGANDA. WHILE ZAMBIAN PRESIDENT KAUNDA REMAINED ZAIRE'S FRIEND, HE WAS NEVERTHELESS BEING INFLUENCED BY COMMUNIST-INFLUENCED ADVISORS AND, FOR EXAMPLE, HAD TO BE INFORMED BY ZAIRE BEFORE REALIZING THAT ANTI-GOZ "KATANGAN GENDARMES" WERE OPERATING FROM ZAMBIAN TERRITORY. HE CONSIDERED KAUNDA TO BE UNDER HEAVY PRESSURE FROM TANZANIA AND UGANDA, ALMOST ALONE, AND IN GREAT DANGER.

(B) MILITARY SITUATION--GIVING NO INDICATION THAT ANOTHER MAJOR INVASION WAS ANTICIPATED IN SHABA, MOBUTU SAID CROSS-BORDER ATTACKS WERE NEVERTHELESS CONTINUING IN THAT AREA.

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HOWEVER, WITH HELP OF US, PARTICULARLY IN COMMUNICATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE, GOZ FORCES ARE USUALLY WAITING FOR ATTACKERS WHEN THEY ARRIVE AND QUICKLY REPULSE THEM. HE DESCRIBED FRENCH AND BELGIAN ASSISTANCE IN TRAINING AND SAID FURTHER EQUIPMENT AND TRAINING AID WILL BE REQUIRED, PARTICULARLY TO COUNTER HEAVY EQUIPMENT, INCLUDING TANKS, ROCKETS, AND AIRCRAFT ARRAYED AGAINST ZAIRE. MOBUTU GAVE HIS WORD THAT ZAIRE WOULD NEVER ATTACK ITS NEIGHBORS AND THEREFORE NEEDED ONLY WEAPONS WITH WHICH TO DEFEND ITSELF. IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, WHERE SHOULD ZAIRE TURN FOR HELP IF NOT TO THE UNITED STATES, ITS POWERFUL FRIEND TO WHOM HIS COUNTRY HAD ALWAYS TURNED IN THE PAST?

(C) ECONOMIC-- MOBUTU REFERRED TO GOZ'S CONTINUING COMMITMENT TO IMF STABILIZATION PLAN AND SAID THAT EVEN IN AFTERMATH OF SHABA, CONSIDERABLE PROGRESS HAD CONTINUED ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THAT PLAN. COMPARATIVELY, GREATER PROGRESS HAD BEEN MADE ON INCREASING RATES OF REPATRIATION OF HARD CURRENCY EARNINGS AND INCREASING GOVERNMENT REVENUES, WHILE THERE HAD BEEN LESS SUCCESS ON REDUCING GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES. RISING PETROLEUM COSTS AND FALLING COPPER PRICES CONTRIBUTED HEAVILY TO ECONOMIC PROBLEMS. GOZ WOULD WELCOME ADDITIONAL EXPERTISE IN MANAGING ITS ECONOMY AS, FOR EXAMPLE, IT HAD ALREADY DONE IN THE TRANSPORTATION SECTOR. AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK HAD HELPED ZAIRE

TO FINANCE BRIDGES AND WATER DELIVERY SYSTEMS; BANK WAS PERFORMING EFFECTIVELY AND MERITED CONTINUED US BACKING.

(D) SOMALIA/ETHIOPIA--MOBUTU DESCRIBED CONVERSATIONS IN RECENT YEARS IN WHICH HE AND SIAD-BARRE HAD ARGUED ABOUT CORRECT ROAD TO FOLLOW. IN REPLY TO SOMALI PRESIDENT'S ABOLOGIA FOR SOCIALIST MATERIALISM, MOBUTU HAD ARGUED FOR FREE ENTERPRISE, INDEPENDENCE, AND THROWING OUT THE RUSSIANS. NOW OAU WAS IN GREAT CONFUSION; ALTHOUGH ORIENTATION OF ETHIOPIAN REGIME HAD LOST IT MUCH OF ITS FORMER BACKING ENJOYED FROM OAU MEMBERS, AND SOMALIA'S STEPS AGAINST SOVIETS AND CUBANS WERE WELCOMED, OAU PRINCIPLE OF TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY NEVERTHELESS MUST BE PRESERVED IN FACE OF OGADEN INVASION.

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(E) ANGOLAN/CABINDAN LIBERATION MOVEMENTS--MOBUTU
INTERPRETED USG INTENTIONS AS IMPROVEMENT OF RELATIONS WITH BOTH
ANGOLA AND CUBA. WHILE SOME KIND OF COOPERATION BY GOZ WITH
HOLDEN ROBERTO (SIC) MIGHT HELP TO DEFEND ZAIRE AGAINST THE
CUBAN THREAT FROM ANGOLA, HE FULLY UNDERSTOOD THAT THIS WOULD
RUN AFOUL OF AMERICAN RESTRICTIONS. HE SAID THAT SINCE JANUARY

1977, WHEN ZAIRE ANNOUNCED ITS INTENTION TO NORMALIZE RELATIONS WITH LUANDA, THERE HAD BEEN NO FURTHER ZAIRIAN ASSISTANCE TO UNITA AND FNLA. MOREOVER, AS ZAIRE HAD CEASED ITS ASSISTANCE TO CABINDAN LIBERATION FORCES, THAT FRONT HAD GOTTEN MUCH QUIETER. IN AN ASIDE, MOBUTU NOTED THAT EVEN NETO IS BEGINNING TO HAVE SECOND THOUGHTS ABOUT HIS RELIANCE ON SOVIETS. WHEN NETO

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ASKS FOR NEW WEAPONS, HE SAID, ANGOLA GETS MORE THAN IT NEEDS, ESPECIALLY TOO MANY "TECHNICIANS."

(F)--WHILE NO IN-DEPTH DISCUSSIONS OF REFORMS TOOK PLACE, MEMBER OF CODEL TOLD PRESIDENT THAT CONGRESS WAS PLEASED BY POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND MILITARY REFORMS ANNOUNCED IN JULY AND NOW BEING INSTITUTED; HE SAID MEMBERS OF CONGRESS WOULD FOLLOW WITH INTEREST PROGRESS OF REFORMS.

4. DURING A BRIEFING AT DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENSE ON NOVEMBER 19, GENERAL BABIA (EQUIVALENT OF OUR CHAIRMAN, JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF) DISCUSSED THE MISSION AND ORGANIZATION OF ZAIRIAN ARMED FORCES (FAZ). BABIA ALSO DESCRIBED POST-SHABA FAZ REORGANIZATION PLANS AND HOW FOREIGN AID, ESPECIALLY FROM FRANCE AND BELGIUM, WOULD ASSIST IN IMPLEMENTING THEM. THE QUESTION PERIOD CONCENTRATED ON CUBAN PRESENCE IN ANGOLA WHICH BABIA CALLED THE PRINCIPAL THREAT TO ZAIRE. THE GENERAL NOTED THAT THE SOVIET UNION REFUSED TO HELP THE THREE PRINCIPAL LIBERATION MOVEMENTS FIGHTING AGAINST PORTUGUESE RULE UNTIL AFTER PORTUGAL HAD DECIDED TO GIVE UP THE STRUGGLE. AT THAT POINT, SOVIET UNION GAVE \$200 MILLION WORTH OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT AND SENT 15,000 CUBAN TROOPS TO ASIST THE MPLA. THE SOVIET EQUIPMENT WAS, HOWEVER, HEAVY WEAPONS, USEFUL NOT AGAINST OTHER LIBERATION GROUPS BUT RATHER AGAINST ANGOLA'S NEIGHBORS. THE GENERAL CONCLUDED THAT ZAIRE WAS THE PRINCIPAL SOVIET/CUBAN TARGET IN AFRICA BECAUSE ITS IDEOLOGY WAS MOST OPPOSED TO THAT OF THE SOVIETS AND ITS PROTEGES.

5. DURING VISIT CODEL HAD OPPORTUNITY TO MEET OTHER KEY ZAIRIANS AS WELL AS SELECTED MEMBERS OF DIPLOMATIC CORPS AND AMERICAN COMMUNITY AT RESIDENCE RECEPTION. CODEL ALSO MET WITH FOREIGN MINISTER UMBA WHO TOGETHER WITH GENERAL BABIA AND AMBASSADOR TO US KASONGO PARTICIPATED IN SESSION WITH PRESIDENT MOBUTU.

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COMMENT: CODEL VISIT TO ZAIRE SERVED USEFUL PURPOSE OF DEMONSTRATING OUR CONTINUING CONCERN FOR GOZ'S SECURITY PROBLEMS AT A TIME WHEN PRESIDENT MOBUTU AND HIS ADVISORS HAVE GNAWING

DOUBTS ABOUT CONTINUATION AND LEVEL OF USG SUPPORT. WELCOME ACCORDED VISITORS DESPITE MOURNING PERIOD AND THE SUBSTANCE OF DISCUSSIONS REFLECTED GOZ AWARENESS OF IMPORTANCE OF ENHANCING ITS REPUTATION IN US CONGRESS. NOTEWORTHY IN THIS CONNECTION WAS (A) MOBUTU'S AFFIRMATION THAT ZAIRE WOULD USE MILITARY EQUIPMENT FOR DEFENSIVE PURPOSES ONLY VIS-A-VIS ITS NEIGHBORS AND (B) HIS ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF US CONCERN RE ANY TRANSFERS OF EQUIPMENT, PARTICULARLY IN CONTEXT OF CONTINUING STRUGGLE IN ANGOLA. INDICATION OF CODEL'S INTEREST IN REFORMS FURTHER REMINDED GOZ AT HIGHEST LEVEL THAT REFORMS ARE CONTINUING TO RECEIVE OUR CLOSE ATTENTION. MOBUTU NOTED IN THIS REGARD GOZ'S INTENTION TO MAINTAIN COOPERATION WITH IMF. MOBUTU WAS SOMEWHAT SUBDUED AND MENTIONED SEVERAL TIMES HIS PREOCCUPATION WITH THE RECENT LOSS OF HIS WIFE. NONETHELESS, HE ROSE TO THE OCCASION AND GAVE A CLEAR, FORCEFUL EXPLANATION OF GOZ'S CONTINUING CONCERN OVER SOVIET/CUBAN/ANGOLAN THREAT AND ZAIRE'S NEED FOR ADDITIONAL SECURITY ASSISTANCE TO MEET THAT THREAT.

7. MEMCONS OF MEETINGS WITH PRESIDENT MOBUTU AND CO). BABIA BEING POUCHED.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: VISITS, CODELS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 21-Nov-1977 12:00:00 am
Decapton Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decapton Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977KINSHA11069
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770431-0797
Format: TEL
From: KINSHASA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19771136/aaaabeau.tel
Line Count: 245
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: e7423e15-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION H
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 STATE 257799
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 03-Feb-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 509147
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ZAIRE VISIT OF CODEL PRICE
TAGS: OREP, MORG, MPOL, MARR, CG, AO, (PRICE, MELVIN)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/e7423e15-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009